

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9392

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SAIGON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 2976

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CB

SUBJ: FEBRUARY 16 AND 17, THE 47TH AND 48TH DAYS OF THE OFFENSIVE

REF: PHNOM PENH 2907

1. SUMMARY. PEAM REANG ISLAND ON THE LOWER MEKONG APPARENTLY FELL TO THE KC. THE 7TH DIVISION ABANDONED ITS COMMAND POST AT TRAPEANG PREY IN A FAILURE OF MORALE AND COMMAND. THE KC HAVE TAKEN NEARLY ALL OF MAUNG RUSSEI SOUTH OF BATTAMBANG ON ROUTE 5 GAINING A LARGE AMOUNT OF RICE PADDY. KAMPOT DEFENDERS KILLED OVER 40 KC AND SEIZED A NUMBER OF WEAPONS. ROCKET ACTIVITY PICKED UP AT POCHENTONG AND IN PHNOM PENH WITH OVER A SCORE INJURED. END SUMMARY.

2. SOMETIME DURING THE EARLY MORNING OF FEBRUARY 17, THE KC REDUCED FANK'S TWO-BATTALION GARRISON AT PEAM REAN ISLAND ON THE LOWER MEKONG. GUNSHIP CREWS REPORT INFlicting HEAVY KC CASUALTIES. REPORTS OF FANK SURVIVORS HAVE NOT COME IN YET BUT FRIENDLY LOSSES ARE PROBABLY HEAVY. THE LOSS OF THIS IMPORTANT GARRISON MAKES FANK'S EVENTUAL EFFORTS TO CLEAR THE LOWER MEKONG CONSIDERABLY TOUGHER.

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3. THE DEFENDERS OF THE 7TH DIVISION COMMAND POST AT TRAPEANG PREY NORTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH OFF ROUTE 5 ABANDONED THEIR POSITION FEBRUARY 16. THE LOSS, ALTHOUGH NOT SIGNIFICANT IN TERMS OF TERRAIN, IS A FAILURE OF COMMAND AND INDICATES THE POOR MORALE OF THE BADLY-MAULED SEVENTH.

4. AFTER A PERIOD OF SUCCESSFUL ATTACKS AGAINST SMALL VILLAGES AROUND MAUNG RUSSEI ON ROUTE 5 SOUTH OF BATTAMBANG, THE KC ATTACKED THE TOWN AND AT LAST REPORT HAD GAINED CONTROL OF ALL EXCEPT FOR A FRIENDLY STRONG POINT AT A SCHOOL AND A FEW OTHER ISOLATED POCKETS. MR-III HEADQUARTERS HAD PLANNED A RELIEF OPERATION FOR TODAY, FEBRUARY 17. BESIDES LYING ASTRIDE KEY ROUTE 5, MAUNG RUSSEI IS AN AGRICULTURAL CENTER WHICH HAS REPORTEDLY STORED A LARGE AMOUNT OF PADDY FROM THIS YEAR'S RICE HARVEST.

5. FANK DEFENDERS AT KAMPOT MET THE ENEMY ON THE TOWN'S PERIMETER AND KILLED 42 WHILE LOSING 23 FRIENDLY CASUALTIES. FANK SEIZED A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL AND CREW-SERVED WEAPONS.

6. ROCKET ACTIVITY STEPPED UP. POCHENTONG TOOK 16 ROUNDS OVER THE TWO DAYS WITH 21 PERSONS WOUNDED. TWO ROCKETS LANDED IN PHNOM PENH WOUNDING THREE AND ANOTHER HIT THE FORMER ESSO WAREHOUSE DESTROYING A QUANTITY OF LUBRICANTS.

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